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Hughes: Reprise Of Khrushchev

The similarities between the Hughes affair and the publication of the Khrushchev "memoirs" by Life magazine a year ago are beginning to bother some experts. Life's alleged payment of nearly \$1,000,000 for the Khrushchev material into a Swiss bank is said to have been revived as an issue in light of the Hughes affair.

It is now being asked, in the wake of the monkey business with the checks in the name of "H. R. Hughes" in the Swiss bank, whether even a "Khrushchev" endorsement of Life's checks would have constituted any sort of proof of authenticity. McGraw-Hill has said it did not ask the bank about the Hughes checks "because we know of Swiss bank secrecy, and we had no hint of fraud at that time." Life had similarly debarred itself from checking where its Khrushchev money really went.

LIFE SAID at the time that the Khrushchev book contract enjoined it to secrecy. It rejected the claim that the authors had used this to hinder inquiries.

But it is now admitted that, in the Hughes case, the provider of the material had explained that any attempt to get independent corroboration of his story might be discovered by Hughes, and, he had said, "That would be the ball game."

Life once explained that it could not release the corroborating Khrushchev material without endangering certain people in Russia. Although Khrushchev is now dead, Life still refuses to reveal the evidence.

If it is claimed that those other than Khrushchev might be endangered, then it would follow that the material did not come from Khrushchev himself, and the question of release would again have to be raised.

WHEN LIFE WAS first asked to authenticate the Khrushchev book, it refused even to discuss the matter. Donald Wilson, vice president of Time, Inc., who was in charge of the matter, claimed that his organization's experience and reputation were sufficient guarantee.

He took the same line in the Hughes controversy: "We're not exactly a movie magazine," he said. "We have proof."

Chester Davis, the lawyer acting for Hughes, says that he got a letter from McGraw-Hill which said, in effect, "Go kiss a pig... we're reputable people."

The evidence at first included "tapes" of the Hughes interviews—but it was later disclosed that these had been "returned." In the Khrushchev case, Life insisted that voice-print tests of the Khrushchev "tapes" proved that the material was genuine, but it refused to release them for an independent check.

The authenticity of the Khrushchev memoirs was originally accepted by most American experts. Other authorities on the Soviet Union had considerable misgivings, and they are now being joined increasingly by their colleagues in the United States.

WHEN KHRUSHCHEV issued his denial, Life said it had expected it. When Hughes issued his, Life said, "We cannot accept this." It insisted that it had "a completely convincing" and "authentic" Hughes autobiography, and that "No one who has read it can doubt its integrity or, upon reading it, that of Clifford Irving."

A similar statement on the Khrushchev book said that Life was "convinced beyond any doubt, and has taken pains to confirm, that this is an authentic record of Nikita Khrushchev's words."

The "pains" it has taken in the Hughes case now ap-

ing the Khrushchev controversy, it was suggested that an international committee of scholars should be allowed to examine the authenticity of the material. It is not too late for Life to release its evidence.

Some of the world's most reputable students of the Soviet Union would be prepared to study it in order to tell Life whether it had the genuine article, or whether it had been taken in by a clever hoax.

Or should Life simply ask the Swiss bank who cashed the "Khrushchev" money?

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Soc. 4.01.1 Life
Soc. 4.01.2 McGraw-Hill